

KINSHIP AND FAMILY LIFE

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potentially he was heir to the wives of any of his *awa*, but that should he try to claim the widow of one of his *awa*, not having previously avoided her mother, the latter would make much trouble about it and try to prevent him from marrying her daughter. He might perhaps be able to settle the matter by killing a sheep and getting some old man to act as peacemaker. The wide rights of access that the Shilluk have to the wives of certain of their clansmen and the wide sense in which inheritance of a "brother's" wife may be interpreted is thus intimately connected with their liberal interpretation of avoidance.

Avoidance of certain other women would not prevent a man from entering the house and even eating there, so long as the woman absented herself and the man sat upon the bare ground. To sit upon a skin, which might be the woman's sleeping mat, would be an intolerable breach of etiquette, for such an act might be taken to imply the possibility of sexual relations.

The wife's *mia*, i.e. her father's brother's wife, is also treated as an *ora* and avoided, but in a modified manner. We were able to observe a good example of this form of behaviour. We were working on the small steamer *Culex* when an old woman joined the group of informants. Our informant, Fakwang, a young married man, went quietly away. We persuaded him to return and he sat on the other side of the funnel so that he could neither see nor be seen by this woman, who was his wife's *mia* and hence his *ora*. Had she been his wife's mother nothing would have induced him to remain; as it was, he said, there would very probably be bad talk among the women about it and he might be reproached that his wife's *mia* had seen his "nakedness".

The wife's brother's wife is called *ora* and treated with the respect due to a mother-in-law. How far she is regarded as a potential mother-in-law it would be difficult to say; there would be no objection to marrying her daughter if the first wife died childless, but it did not appear to be customary. When told that among another people (the Ba Thonga) if a wife died childless the widower might claim his wife's brother's wife, or take her daughter in her stead, the custom was approved, though foreign to the Shilluk usage.<sup>1</sup>

Avoidance may be relaxed somewhat a few years after marriage,

<sup>1</sup> Claiming the wife's brother's wife with the mother-in-law is common in the Sudan: we found no reason for this, but think that given by the Nuer to Professor Evans-Pritchard may probably hold for other tribes (see p. 219). Should the wife's mother die, then her status may be held by the wife's brother's wife.

## XL

## Introduction

latter; when a person is ill, they may say: *gi jəgt* "Why, Jwok?" The sudden and violent death of a man is regarded as being caused by Jwok. But I do not think there is any ethical motive in our sense underlying this belief; Jwok has simply killed the man for having offended him, probably without knowing it. The name of Jwok is used in a favourable sense in the following phrases of salutation: when a person arrives, he is saluted: *gi kgi jəgt* "you have brought Jwok"; to one starting on a journey they say: *gi mgi jəgt* "you may hold fast Jwok". — Jwok has also the meaning of "sickness"; the reason for this is the conviction that Jwok is the cause of sickness; "he is sick", they express by "he has Jwok", "Jwok is upon him".

Although the Shilluk does certainly not connect with the word Jwok the same notion as we do with "God", Jwok is doubtless the only word fit for being used in the Christian sense. It is true the word occurs in stories in rather a disrespectful sense, any being with more than natural powers being called a Jwok; but this is so in analogous cases with many African peoples, and will almost always be so in heathen languages; it can therefore not form a real obstacle for using the word in Christian preaching and literature.

[In older literature the name Kelge appears as that of the "creator of the Shilluks." I have never heard this name].

The tradition on the origin of man or rather of the Shilluks leads to the second and most important part of the religious practice of the people, viz. the worship of Nyikang. This tradition runs thus: A white or rather greyish cow, *geñi aduk*, came out of the river; she brought forth a gourd; when this gourd split, a man and animals came forth out of it (vide page 178). The name of this man was *Kelge*; *Kelge* begat *Omaro*, who begat *Wat Mgi* ("son of *Mgi*"); *Wat Mgi* begat *Okwa*. *Okwa* used to go to the riverside; here he met repeatedly two maidens who had come from out the water, they were very beautiful and had long hair, but the lower part of their bodies was like the form of a crocodile. One day *Okwa* seized the girls and carried them away. Their screams brought out their father, who till then had not been seen by *Okwa*. His face and the left side of his body were like human, but his right side was green of colour and had the form of a crocodile. When asked he declared his name to be *Odigi*, he protested against his daughters being taken away by force, but afterwards consented. *Okwa* married the girls. The names of the two maidens were *Nyakayo* and *Ongwat* (*Nakayo* and *Oiwat*). One of *Nyakayo*'s sons was *Nyikang*; according to some this was the eldest child, while others say he was the youngest. *Nyakayo* had more children beside *Nyikang*; of one son the name is known, he was *Ongi*; the names of her daughters are (according to A. E. S.) *Ad Dai*, *Ari Umkar*, and *Banyang*. *Okwa*'s second wife *Ongwat* gave birth to one son, *Ju* or *Bowg*. *Okwa* married

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THE ORIGIN  
OF THE  
SHILLUKS

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*nāch* back: behind: *nāch jal gwi* behind this man;

*būtq* side: beside: *būte wgt* beside the house;

*yech* belly: in: *yey pi* in water;

*dygr*, often shortened into *dī*, middle: amidst, in, *dī nam* in the water.

*fa* the base, the lower part: under, below: *fa yaŋ* under the tree.

*Verbs:*

*witq* to reach: *witq awa a ba bi* reaching yesterday he did not come: until y...

*gitq* to reach: *gitq gūki* till to-morrow.

*Particles* which cannot traced back to nouns or verbs:

*kī* may have very different meanings; its original meaning is: with; *kī mwa* with whom; *kī tqa* with a spear;

*yī* towards, by: *a nēt yī jal an* he was killed by this man; *kgi yī jal dapi* go to the master; *yī* is connected with personal pronouns as follows: *ya* to me,

*yī* to you, *ya* to him, *yī wga*, *yī wua*, *yī gga*.

Salutations.

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Some of the most used forms of salutations are given here. A. is the villager, B. the stranger.

Instead of our knocking the door, the Shilluks, before entering a courtyard, say: *yā nā* I am waiting (may I come in?) A. answers: *bi* come! If the salutation is going on in the open place of the village, as is usual, this phrase is not said.

A. *yī bi* you have come?

B. *yā bi* I have come, or: *yā nēt*.

A. *yī kgi juŋk* you have brought God.

B. *yī mīŋ juŋk* you have held fast God.

A. *yī nā* did you sleep (well)?

B. *yā nā* I slept (well).

A. *yī kwai* (meaning not known).

B. *ā, yā bi*.

A. *wotq nēt* are the little ones well (existing)?

B. *Nēt* they are well.

A. *tygi gēl an* your women (are well)?

B. *Nēt* they are well.

A. *Tēg bēdi* you? Are the people well?

B. *Nut* they are. — These enquiries after the well-being of the people in the house can be extended at will, to grandparents, grandchildren, cousins etc.

On leaving:

B. says: *yā kgiŋ fack* I am going home.

A. *kgi* go! or: *kgi juŋk* go with God!

\*539 Kine: *à, àgch, kët, kâlú jwók! Ka gë bēng. Ka gë wape fōte gën, ka bül gōch, ka tēre chōng kī bāl. Ka gë lōgo: wuna yik tēre, é, wé dúk, dë bēt péñ māt.*

\*539 The people go hunting game, a game for the king, a gyek-antelope. And all  
224 the people go, they are many, and the chiefs address them: "O ye people,  
643 (hear) a commandment of the king, concerning the gyek-antelope, which belongs  
651 to the king: if any man let the game escape, he shall surely be fined!" Then  
they pray: "O Nyikang, this matter is under your auspices! Do not suffer us  
to have any mishap! You grandfather of man, kill the game well, so that we  
may incur no debts! May it be killed well, o Nyikang!" Then a goat is brought,  
it is speared; a fowl is brought and cut up. Now the hunting-party arises, each  
part (goes) in a different direction. And when many antelopes have been killed,  
the people come back, and the chiefs assemble, and the game is brought before  
them; when they have brought it all, the big (district-) chief divides the animals,  
and says: "This chief shall take this, and this one shall take that;" then he  
says: "Tan it!" And they tan it. When they have finished tanning, the skins  
are brought before the chief for examination. The chief (when he has examined  
them) says: "All right!" Again he says: "Shall we not bring them (to the king)?"  
He seizes a cow, which they take with them (to Fashoda); all the chiefs  
assemble, and go to Fashoda. When they arrive there, they ask for permission  
to enter (the royal court). It is said to the king: "The chiefs have come." They  
greet the king: "Our Lord, we have come." He asks: "What do you bring?"  
They answer: "We have brought royal goods." The king asks: "How many?"  
They reply: "Sixty." He answers: "Very well." Then the king brings a big  
steer, and gives it to the chiefs. The steer is killed, and the chiefs stay to eat  
it, together with a cow. Then they ask the king for permission to go: "Our  
lord, shall we not go now? (we will go now!)" The king answers: "Why, hold  
fast (to) God (that is: stay!)" So the chiefs remain; and beer is strained, and  
they stay to drink. Afterward the king says: "Well, all right, go now with  
God!"

When they come home and approach their villages, the drum is beaten, and  
the people dance to the drum; then they address the people: "O ye people,  
we have returned; may the country live in peace!"<sup>1</sup>

## 28. Making Boats for the King.

\*539 A kët tēre bē nūwēt kī yat, yēte kwēr, ka tēre nūdh, ka yat kāl, ká tēre bēnd, ka  
tēre wapi fash. Ka jāge chwól, ka yat tyer ká è nēng, ka e kape mē, ka e ko: kwán  
yēt ak! Ka kwán, ka e ko: mēt an ba mēt rīt, ka mēt an tyē, ka gë kwōch, ka  
gë bēng gin keau Bachōdō.

<sup>1</sup> The dyek-antelope belongs to the king, out of its hide clothes for the king's wives are made.

## THE SHILLUK TRIBE

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firesome to those who encounter them, do not merit discussion. Subordination and obedience are not in themselves virtues. That the Shilluk are often highly insolent to those in authority is undeniable. This insolence usually takes the form of a supercilious silence and apparent complete disdain implying that "diplomatic relations have now been broken off." This attitude is really not exactly what it seems. In fact it is suppressed rage; but since their symptoms of temper differ from our own we are inclined, often wrongly, to think that it is pure calculated insolence. [181] [181] [648] [152]

The Shilluk have a code of manners which is remarkable. This is instilled into them when young. Even as neatness and order prevail within their houses so are the children taught good manners. When four or five years of age they are made to sit up straight at meals and eat properly. These good manners remain with them through life and distinguish their bearing from that of neighbouring tribes. Doubtless it is in part an empty form but the fact remains that the Shilluk manners are excellent, and their way of sitting in a meeting with their legs drawn backwards to one side and the soles of their feet concealed from view is very neat. No smoking is tolerated at such meetings and their general tone is orderly. [576] [861] [516] [276]

There is a habit, when listening to a superior speaking, of punctuating his remarks with a formal indication of assent. The word thus used varies with the speaker, and is most obvious when the speaker is the *Reth*. Here the word is either *kile kwan* ("the likeness of his ancestor," i.e., Nyikang) or *Kunajuok* ("God's last born"). For members of *Kwar Reth* the word is *Kaiyo*, for the *Ororo* it is *Nyagol* and for some reason for the *Jung* clan it is *Dhiang*.<sup>1</sup> [576] [195]

It has already been explained how certain members of the *Kwar Reth* must be addressed by their titles or with their titles prefixed to their names. There are also certain respectful modifications which must be made to normal speech when speaking to or about the *Reth*, a *Nyirath*, or anyone of importance. These modifications relate largely to verbs of motion. The fiction has to be laboriously maintained that such [195] [565] [554] [614] [644]

1. *Kaiyo* means "eldest born," *Nyagol* means "one of the family" and *Dhiang* means, literally "cow."

195 beings have no motive power other than divine impulse. They are  
 565 moved always by God. Thus *yi kal juok* (you have been brought  
 614 by God) takes the place of *yi bi* (you have come) which is a normal form  
 644 of greeting among friends.

195 When the conversation relates to or is being carried on with the  
 643 *Reth* himself, more complicated modifications are necessary. Objects  
 used by the *Reth* are called differently from their normal names.  
 There are many examples, most of which have been given by Professor  
 Westermann. It is interesting that the names which objects assume  
 owing to their association with the *Reth* are always names of similar  
 but inferior objects. Thus his beer is called "water," his donkey is  
 called his "dog," his spear is his "stick" and, strangest perhaps of all  
 his head is his "pebble."

195 Elaborate circumlocution is necessary when enquiring about child-  
 844 birth. A married woman can hardly be asked if she has children or  
 how many had she got. Even a husband should not be asked outright  
 576 whether or not his wife had produced him children. The husband will  
 be asked "has your wife found something small?" or "has your  
 wife been helped by God?" It is also very bad manners to ask a  
 woman what is the name of her husband.

835 These conventions might lead one to suppose that matters of sex  
 were regarded as delicate *per se*, but this is hardly the truth. Outside  
 wedlock there is no nicety. An unmarried girl will be asked with  
 [836] brutal frankness "*yi yaci men*" ("you were made pregnant by whom?")  
 and here the word is the same as that used in talking of domestic  
 animals. The inference is that delicacy is required not because the  
 subject relates to sex but only if and when it touches upon the marriage  
 tie.

576 No one can deny that the Shilluk are by our standards brutal.  
 682 Their code dictates that a man may be killed for a man, quite irres-  
 pective of the victim's guilt provided only he is from the clan of the  
 killer of the man avenged.

577 Their moral code, though peculiar, is definite and strictly observed.  
 [837] The marriage tie is not sacrosanct, but rape, as also prostitution, is  
 548] almost unknown. Both are regarded with abhorrence.

## INSTALLATION OF A KETH

35

touch the ground, but always rested on the foot of the bearer when he stopped<sup>13</sup>. These three men took their place at the head of the "bull procession", and started for Fashoda. 643  
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We were told that as soon as they reached Khor Arepejur in front of Fashoda they would send messengers back to our village of Adodo and others ahead to the village of Debalo, where the king-to-be-inducted was residing. Then when the messengers arrived at the respective villages the two processions would start simultaneously from the villages about equal distance from Fashoda to meet at Khor Arepejur for the final ceremony.

After the Golbany and the old men left, preparations were made for a sacrifice inside the enclosure in front of the houses where reside Nyikang and Dak. I noticed that no one passed these houses without bowing low and saying *Kwa dibong*, which in modern parlance would be "Your Honour". A small ram was brought, and then was killed by having its throat cut. This ceremony was attended by only a few of the people gathered in the village, and the others did not seem to pay much attention to it. A few minutes later, however, a female goat was brought and tied to the enclosure, on the outside, and all the men in the village gathered and sat on the ground in an attitude of utmost respect, every man with his feet under him and the backs of his hands touching the ground in front of him. Most of the people in the village were the custodians of Nyikang and Dak and had been accompanying them on the eight-day march from the village of Akurwa, which is the traditional home of these gods. None of these men carried spears, but all were armed with whips of Nyikang, which is rather a testimony that these gods do not need clubs and spears to protect them, but men armed as women are sufficient to overcome all opposition. There were about sixty men in the group from the village of Akurwa led by their chief. As the young female goat baa-ed, one of the old men in the group addressed it thus, "why do you cry, are you not [782]  
[778]  
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13. This was the practice with all sacred spears, and the images of Dak and Cal as well. Nyikang of course was never put on the ground.

## SUDAN NOTES AND RECORDS

533 destroyed, Yor son of Nyidhongo, the country is ruined," is one of the main  
 539 refrains of the song of Yor. Other songs refer to the immortality of their  
 766 *reths*. Of Dak, son of Nyikang, we hear that he only vanished, he did not die.  
 [775] Of Kweikon, who was killed in battle against the Dervishes at Jebel Gadir,  
 they sing, *Kurjang* (Kweikon) *cie keny aboi tho nyiwang kecdi tho wadi mini*,  
 [173] "Kurjang the fierce one, when he went out to die he did not fear, fierce one,  
 death is only sleeping."

766 Warriors from the surrounding settlement of Fanyidwai Pac then entered  
 in battle order, carrying their shields and spears. After a preliminary march  
 [576] round the arena, spears and shields were discarded and only sticks and millet  
 stalks carried. This is usual at Shilluk public ceremonies. Dances continued  
 for three days, men of Fanyikang, Dettim, Fakang and Malakal attended  
 and the procedure was not different. Over two hundred and eighty oxen  
 were slaughtered for the occasion, the tails and some of the horns being hung  
 on the fence surrounding the tomb, while the meat was consumed by the  
 participants.

[783] On the final day, after a great show of dancing and further sacrifices, the  
 ceremony of purification known as *dungo* (or *Yud*) took place. The *bangreth*,  
*nyireth* and also many other kinsmen of the late *reth* were conducted by the  
*ororo* into the centre of the village, where an ox was sacrificed while they sat  
 round in the centre. According to strict Shilluk custom, this should have  
 [177] been followed by a general shaving of heads. In fact, they did not do so,  
 302 possibly because the ritual bathing in the river was considered sufficient  
 purification. No satisfactory explanation for this deviation from custom was  
 forthcoming. It is worth mentioning also that the *okak nam*, latrine, and the  
*bilo* (or *gol pi*) bath place, of the late *reth*, which are attached to the *gol dwong*  
 and used by him in the past, were fenced off and guarded. Anyone approach-  
 ing them was seized by the *ororo* and made to pay a small forfeit.

643 The *reth*-elect, Kurwad Fafiti, was present on the first day of the *wowo*,  
 as a gesture of respect to his predecessor, for it is not necessary for the new  
 766 *reth* to be there and he never appears in public. In particular he may not  
 see the relics of Nyikang carried by the *kwa* Nyikir, for these are associated  
 with the death and burial of a *reth*, not with the living.

766 The *kwa* Nyikir then set out for Debwor where a similar ceremony was  
 to be held for the northern Shilluk. I was not myself present and am  
 indebted to Mr. J. L. Baker for the following account.

"On November 21st, the *ororo* and *kwa* Nyikir had returned to Fashoda  
 for the final act in the obsequies of *reth* Dak and arrived there after several  
 days spent on the road. At about 4 p.m., as at Kujo where the actual bodily

537 *Yago Yorleiker*, the chief of *Gol Nyikang*, rose to make the first speech, 643 carrying a spear in his hand. A delay occurred as the *reth's* drummer was missing and had to be found. Then *jago Yorleiker*, followed by *jago Thabo* of *Golbainy* and titular chief of *Gol Dhiang*, and other chiefs in order of precedence came forward to address the *reth* on his installation. Nearly all carried presentation spears which were thrust into the ground in front of the *reth*, though one or two, as in the case of *kwanyireth Akwei Anyong* of *Detwok*, placed a bead on the ground. The speeches were on the whole short, and took the form of exhortations to the *reth* to emulate his father's example and to work closely with the Government; to pay attention to his elder advisers; to visit all the Shilluk lands and to avoid favoritism; to deal fairly with the Shilluk. As each speaker finished he was applauded by the rattling of *Nyikang's* shield and the beating of the drum, for longer or shorter periods according to the quality, or perhaps, acceptability, of the speech. Those who were most honoured were accompanied back to their place by the shield-bearer before the latter turned to signal out the next speaker. Last of all the chiefs to speak were *jago Ongwany wad Kak* and *jago Kwathi wad Kudjok* of *Tonga*, the traditional wardens of the Shilluk Marches at the northern and southern extremities of their country.

Finally the *reth* rose to speak. He walked forward to where rows of spears had been stuck in the ground and there, amid reverent interjections of *who* from the assembled Shilluk, he harangued the chiefs for their failure to produce the cattle of the late *reth* which were his just due.<sup>2</sup>

As he spoke he paced backwards and forwards along the lines of spears, evoking grudging grunts of agreement to his apparently rhetorical questions. Having delivered his speech, he stepped back, took hold of the ceremonial sword and made passes over the back of the white bull with a black face which 643 had been tethered on his right. A Shilluk then speared the bull, again with 782 considerable lack of skill, and the *reth* departed on his tour of the royal houses of *Fashoda*. A slight altercation broke out over who was to have which spears presented by the Chiefs; but the installation of *reth Kur wad Fafiti*, the thirty- 578 second *reth* of the Shilluk, was over.

<sup>2</sup> As explained in a previous article (*S.N. & R.*, Vol. 33, Part 1) the immediate and personal heirs of the late *reth* had attempted to conceal many of the cattle which are royal property and should go to his successor.

## SHILLUK "ROYAL" LANGUAGE CONVENTIONS.

By M. E. C. Pumphrey.

THE Shilluk divide themselves with great distinctness into two divisions, namely "Royal Blood" (Shil., KWAR RETH) and "Shilluk" (Shil., COLLO). KWAR RETH includes, with the exception of a single distant branch called the "Ororo," all the living patrilineal descendants of the semi-mythical but historical Nyikang Okwa, who, in about 1540, is supposed to have led a party from the neighbourhood of Wau into the present Shilluk country. 565 644

Within the KWAR RETH there are three higher titles. These are *Reth*, for the reigning king; *Nyireth*, for the son of a king, reigning or dead; and *Nyareth* or *Nyinyireth*, for the son of a *Nyireth*. All other members of the KWAR RETH are entitled *Kwar Nyireth*, which is elided into *Kwa'nyireth*. All KWAR RETH should be addressed by prefixing their title to their names or else by the use of their titles alone, an exception to this last being that you never address the *Reth* as *Reth* but use the appellation *Wuo*. 576 559

The Shilluk say that they found the Fung in the present Shilluk country and that they drove them out northwards. Undoubtedly, however, many remained as an inferior caste, and there are still traces of a Kwar Fung (Fung clan). The remaining Fung, together with the reputedly small band of Shilluk who accompanied Nyikang, presumably form, with subsequent accretions, the ancestors of the COLLO. Nyikang and his sons are the ancestors of the KWAR RETH. 173 565 563

When using the Shilluk language it is important not only to use the proper title when addressing a member of the KWAR RETH but also to make certain deferential modifications in some words and expressions. Only some of these modifications are necessary when addressing a mere *Kwa'nyireth* (largely those of implying divine intervention in all verbs of motion), but when addressing the *Reth* certain fictions have to be borne carefully in mind. 576 565 644 195

For example, the *Reth* and, less rigorously, District Commissioners and their assistants do not sleep. Strangely enough, they go out to graze (Shil., *kwa*). They never exist unaided. When not more specifically 195 643 648

195 employed they are being nursed by God (Shil., *mith yi Jwok*). They do  
 643 not go to, come from or enter a house : they are taken to, brought from  
 648 or stuffed into a house (as the case may be) by God. God is supposedly  
 [576] the sole motive power of such ethereal beings. Sometimes this fiction  
 produces strange complications in the syntax, and another difficulty is  
 that in replying you must be careful to use the ordinary word in relation  
 to yourself, thus tacitly deprecating the idea of any divine agency as far  
 as you are concerned.

195 The *Reth's* head is respectfully designated his "pebble," his pipe is  
 643 his "mud," his beer is his "water" and his donkey is his "dog." When  
 he sits on the ground he is said to have "come to anchor" (Shil., *amak*).  
 When he gets up he is, of course, lifted by God. It seems that the terms  
 used for royal objects are not, as might have been expected, names of  
 things superior to the actual object, but that they are inferior substitutes.  
 An explanation may be that in the magnificence of the royal presence the  
 objects surrounding him lose half their natural lustre.

195 In the following dialogue the Shilluk expressions which would be  
 643 used are translated as exactly as possible into English. If there is any-  
 648 thing comic in it, it must be stressed that this is purely incidental to the  
 539 purpose of this note (which is serious).

Scene—FASHODA. The District Commissioner stops the lorry  
 outside the royal house to pick up the *Reth* to take him to Kodok to  
 meet the Governor.

D.C. (*by way of greeting*) : You have been out grazing, Father ?

RETH (*deprecatingly*) : I have slept ; have you been out to graze ?

D.C. : Yes, thank you, I have slept.

RETH : You have been brought by God ?

D.C. : I have come.

RETH : You are being nursed by God ?

D.C. : I am quite well, thank you ; now, are you ready to be taken  
 by God to Kodok ? If so, be lifted up by God into the front seat beside  
 me and we will be off ; . . . but wait ; have you got that thing for  
 your pebble which the Governor-General gave you ?

RETH : Oh, I am so sorry. I have forgotten to get it. I will go and  
 fetch it. Meanwhile, you be taken by God in the lorry to that tree, turn

*The Promised Land*

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of frenzied barking, as all the mongrels in the place, suddenly galvanized into life at the appearance of a stranger, give tongue to their displeasure and make a concerted rush with the evident intention of tearing me to pieces. I shout to one or two youths loitering near and ask them to call off the dogs, but to no avail, so I seize a stick and get in a telling smack or two on some which have ventured too near, and disperse the rest with a few well-aimed lumps of cotton soil. They retreat to a safe distance barking and growling threateningly, but at least I can make my way into the village in peace. There is little stir; a few men squat near the cow byre gossiping while one lies prostrate on the ground with the village hairdresser anointing his hair with a mixture of red mud, oil and ashes as a preparation for building it up into an elaborate coiffure. Most of the women have not yet returned from their daily trudge to the river for water, but the spirals of smoke rising from behind the reed fences which surround the individual homesteads indicate that some of the more industrious housewives have already begun to prepare the morning meal. A group of small children, pot-bellied and large-eyed, soon run to surround the Father and his bicycle; gravely they scrutinize him and his mount while some shyly offer him the customary Shilluk greeting, 'Yi bi—You have come'. The bolder spirits among them venture to come closer to investigate the wonder of his wrist watch, putting their ears against it to hear its ticking with smiles of amazement and delight.

The children follow the priest as he wheels his cycle across the open space to where the knot of idlers is sitting near the cattle byre. The village chief who is among them rises courteously to greet the white man; 'Jal duong,' he says, 'Yi nin: Great one, you have slept.' I answer him in accustomed fashion, 'Yi nut: You are here,' and then each man of the group greets me separately and receives his answer. I seat myself in the place of honour on the chief's mat and smoke a cigarette with him, discussing the prospects of the crops and making enquiries about certain ones in whom I am interested. Soon I excuse myself and go off in search of my

## CHAPTER VIII

## RELIGION

It is so easy to suppose, when speaking of the peoples who live in the continent of Africa as pagan, that they are without any religion at all and have no knowledge or recognition of God. Yet it is absolutely untrue of them all. Certainly among the Shilluk people there is not one, no matter how remote from Christian influence, who would not willingly subscribe to the first article of the Creed: 'I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.' He does indeed believe in God, the Supreme Omnipotent Spirit, Creator of all things, Lord of life and death, the great Jwok-Atang. I once commenced instructing a dying Shilluk chief by asking him 'Do you believe in God?' He looked at me in wonder that I should ask so foolish a question, and replied 'Of course I do. All men believe in God.' And undoubtedly, to the Shilluk, God is very real. On entering a village, you are greeted in His name, '*Yi kall yi Jwok*,' i.e. 'God has brought you.' As you leave you are sped on your way with a prayer, '*Yi mith yi Jwok*.' 'May God guard you.' A person looking very seedy and sorry for himself will come and tell you that 'he has God', by which you immediately understand not that he has experienced a sudden religious conversion, but that he is sick. So too, good fortune and misfortune both are attributed to God, and of the latter, even the most crushing ones, the failure of the crops, the decimation of the cattle through plague, the death of a loved one through sickness or accident, although grieved over, are accepted resignedly as coming from God.

Yet here there is a great paradox, for although God is acknowledged by the Shilluk as the Lord of all things, and His name is so frequently invoked, yet He is not worshipped by the people and to Him no prayer or sacrifice is offered.

763 lying right across the entrance. It was poor Rachael who  
 \* 797 had been stretched out across the threshold where anyone  
 [521] entering the hut could not fail to step on or fall over her.  
 Sitting against the wall opposite the entrance were four  
 ancient-looking hags who were simply passing the time  
 away in gossip whilst waiting for the old woman to die.  
 When I made my undignified entrance, one of the unlovely  
 quartette, Rachael's daughter, said, 'Get up, Rachael.  
 Here's the Father and he has brought you a burying cloth.'  
 Said I, 'I haven't brought a burying cloth.' Chorus from  
 the four beauties: 'He hasn't brought a cloth, Rachael;  
 don't get up.' To me, 'What have you brought?' 'I have  
 come to give her a blessing.' 'Oh! He's come to give you a  
 blessing, Rachael; don't get up.' At this point poor Rachael  
 dimly understood that someone had come to give her some-  
 thing, so she asked me to put it in her hand and not let the  
 others get it.

I thought that I had better get on with the good work,  
 and blessing the hut and Rachael with holy water, I began  
 to recite the Litany of the Dying. Half-way through, there  
 was an interruption from the daughter: 'Jal duong'—a  
 [514] pause whilst she spits, across Rachael and through the  
 doorway; a good ten feet.

Myself: 'What?'

Daughter: 'Yi bi.'

● [576] This normal Shilluk greeting often comes, not when first  
 meeting a person, but halfway through the conversation or  
 visit. I said something more than my prayers, while the four  
 resumed their gossip and spitting.

Daughter: 'Jal duong, Jal duong.'

Myself: 'All ye Holy Virgins and Widows—Shut up.'

Daughter: 'O-oh! He says: "Shut up," and I was going to  
 tell him that I went to the Sister to tell her that my mother  
 was dying and to ask for a cloth to bury her in.'

At length, without further interruption I finished the  
 prayers for the Dying, and gave poor Rachael one final  
 blessing and prepared to depart. The four beldams followed  
 me out of the hut, and the following conversation resulted: